

Fearing God

Introduction: Last week, we spoke of the importance of *Seeing God*, and how such is accomplished- through His *Creation, Word, Son, and People*. I felt that lesson needed to precede this one on *Fearing God*.

Eccl.12:13, “*The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: **fear God and keep His commandments**, because this applies to every man.*” NASB. Other translate the last phrase as: “*this is the whole duty of man,*” KJV/ESV; “*this is man’s all,*” NKJV; “*that is the whole duty of everyone,*” RSV; and Young’s Literal Version, “*this is the whole of man.*” Likewise, in the NT...

1Pet.2:17, “*Honor all men; love the brotherhood, **fear God**, honor the king.*”

Definition: The Hebrew word typically translated as “*fear*” in English texts is **yare’** (*yaw-ray*). It is generally defined as *to fear* or *to be afraid*, but is also rendered as *to revere* or *honor and respect*. So, should we *fear* and *be afraid* of God, or *revere* and *respect* him.

In the NT, the Greek word usually translated as “*fear*” is *phobos*, which, as its Hebrew counterpart, means both to be *afraid* or even *terrified* and to *treat with reverence* or *deferential obedience; venerate; or reverence*.

So which is it? Are we to *be afraid* of God, or to *revere* and *venerate* Him? In a word, “Yes” is the answer. Let’s note a few examples, from both the Old and New Testaments, of both applications; times when others *feared* God, or at least should have...

Occasions/Circumstances when we ought to both *fear* and *revere* God:

- **When in His presence, Ex.3:5-6.** There is no doubt that Moses was *afraid*, v.6- who wouldn’t have been? But it is also certain that God demanded *reverence* while in His direct presence, v.5. Are these not two sides of the same coin? Total *deference* and *veneration* because of being so *terrified* that those bare feet could hardly stay put (mainly because they were too *scared* to even run)?
- **When receiving His Law, Ex.19:7-25; Neh.8:1-3,5-9.** When the presence of God appeared “*in fire*” with “*the smoke of a furnace*” to give them the Law, and God’s voice was “*with thunder*” and *mountain of God “quaked violently”* (vv.18-19) that the people were *afraid* to “*meet God,*” v.17. They had been warned that if they *came near* or *touched the mountain* that they would be “*put to death,*” v.12! But it is also clear that generations later, when Judah had been returned from 70 years of captivity in Babylon, when they were *reintroduced* to God and His Law, they manifested great *reverence* for Him and It as they *stood, shouted “Amen! Amen!”* and *stood in their places* and *wept* at Its reading, Neh.8:5,6,7,9.
- **When He punishes the disobedient, Acts 5:1-11 (cf.Matt.15:15-18; 1Cor.5:4).** Even the righteous should be *fearful* when God punishes the wicked. If you had siblings, do you remember how you felt with they were disciplined by your parents? Sorry for them, but glad it wasn’t you, right? But more than that, you were learning *fearful reverence!* You weren’t *afraid* of your father/mother, unless

you knew you had done wrong and your punishment was forthcoming. You knew this because you had seen it before!

- **When dying under His condemnation, Luke 23:39-43.**

The *other* thief on the cross did not manifest *bravado*, just *stupidity*. Anyone who would *spit in the face* of the One capable of committing him to eternal torment can't be anything else!

So what happened? How did we get to the point where so many seemingly have “no fear (reverence or phobia) of God”?

1. **They were taught that *God doesn't exist*.** We don't *fear* what we have been taught *doesn't exist*- much less *reverence* it.
2. **Even if they believed in God's existence, they were taught that He is all love and no discipline; all mercy and no justice; all grace and no obedience (required); and that He is all blessings and no punishment.** They were not only taught to *accentuate the positive* and *ignore the negative*- they were taught to *deny the negative*!

Conclusion:

Behold the *dichotomy of God*: Romans 2:4-10. We must *reverence* His unfathomable goodness, Rom.2:4,7; Heb.10:19-25; *fear* His awesome destructive power, Rom.2:5-6,8; Heb.10:26-31.